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Latin America

**REGIONAL AND
POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

(63)

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Focus on Human Rights

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The most dramatic new breakthrough occurred last week in Chile when President Pinochet announced his decision to abolish the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA). New guidelines suggest that most of DINA's personnel will be absorbed by a National Information Center which will be subordinate to the Interior Ministry. In addition, DINA's arrest and detention powers are being transferred to the national police (Carabineros) and the Judicial Police within the Defense Ministry. While illegal activity is still possible under this arrangement, it appears that opportunities for repressive practices will be greatly reduced.

18 August 1977

~~SECRET~~

-- The new agency will not report directly to the president.

-- Both the Carabineros and the Judicial Police are highly regarded professional law enforcement organizations.

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-- [REDACTED] Pinochet is now convinced that the Marxist threat to his regime has diminished significantly.

Pinochet's decision on DINA closely follows his announcement earlier last week that Chile would begin a phased transition of power to civilian rule culminating in limited popular elections by 1985. Chile thus joins the governments of Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Uruguay that have announced their intention to hold elections in the next several years.

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18 August 1977

2

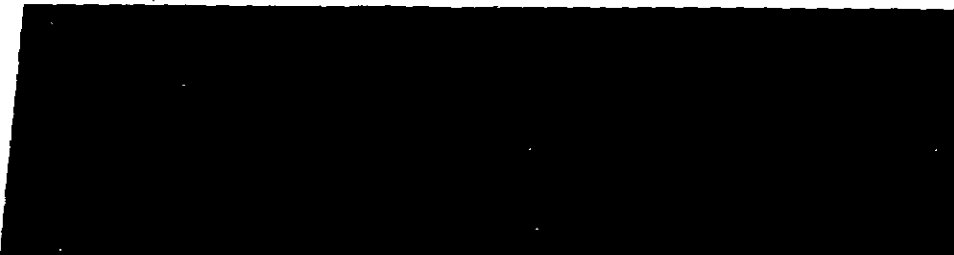
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Reasons for Change



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The Chileans, for example, have been debating whether the risks of internal subversion are so great that they have to risk jeopardizing their traditional good relations with the US, especially when there is no alternative benefactor. Thus, defending internal security raises the question of external security--particularly regarding the possibility of war with Peru. A


18 August 1977

3
~~SECRET~~

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June editorial in the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* summed it up best: "One does not have to stand fast nor ask for understanding from a wave breaking over him. One must duck and let it pass over. So it is in small countries' relations with large ones."

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Another factor in the changing outlook is that the internal security threat in the countries under military rule has diminished. Chilean President Pinochet and Argentine President Videla, for example, both appear to be confident that subversives, while they can cause isolated incidents, can no longer challenge the authority of the government or the process of forming new institutions. The Uruguayans and Paraguayans appear somewhat less confident in this regard. Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru have shown that they can handle potential disruptions. The El Salvadoreans have not yet been seriously challenged.

The argument would seem to follow that if draconian measures are no longer needed to maintain the security of the state, the country can move toward a full rule of law and normal political activity. Ecuador's announced return to civilian rule in 1978 and the subsequent announcements by Peru and Bolivia that they also would hold elections in coming years seems to have had a positive effect on Chile and Uruguay in that neither country wants to be isolated from a prevailing political trend. Moreover, none of the military governments wants to admit that a return to the rule of law would weaken its ability to maintain internal security.

In addition to these positive factors for change on the human rights issue, there are several bilateral and multilateral problems among the South American nations that have continued to work against closer relations in general and anti-US attitudes in particular. The threat of war in the Andes, resulting primarily from Lima's acquisition of large quantities of sophisticated Soviet arms, still inhibits full cooperative relationships among Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru. There is also the continuing problem of Bolivian access to the sea. Chilean-Argentine relations, in general,

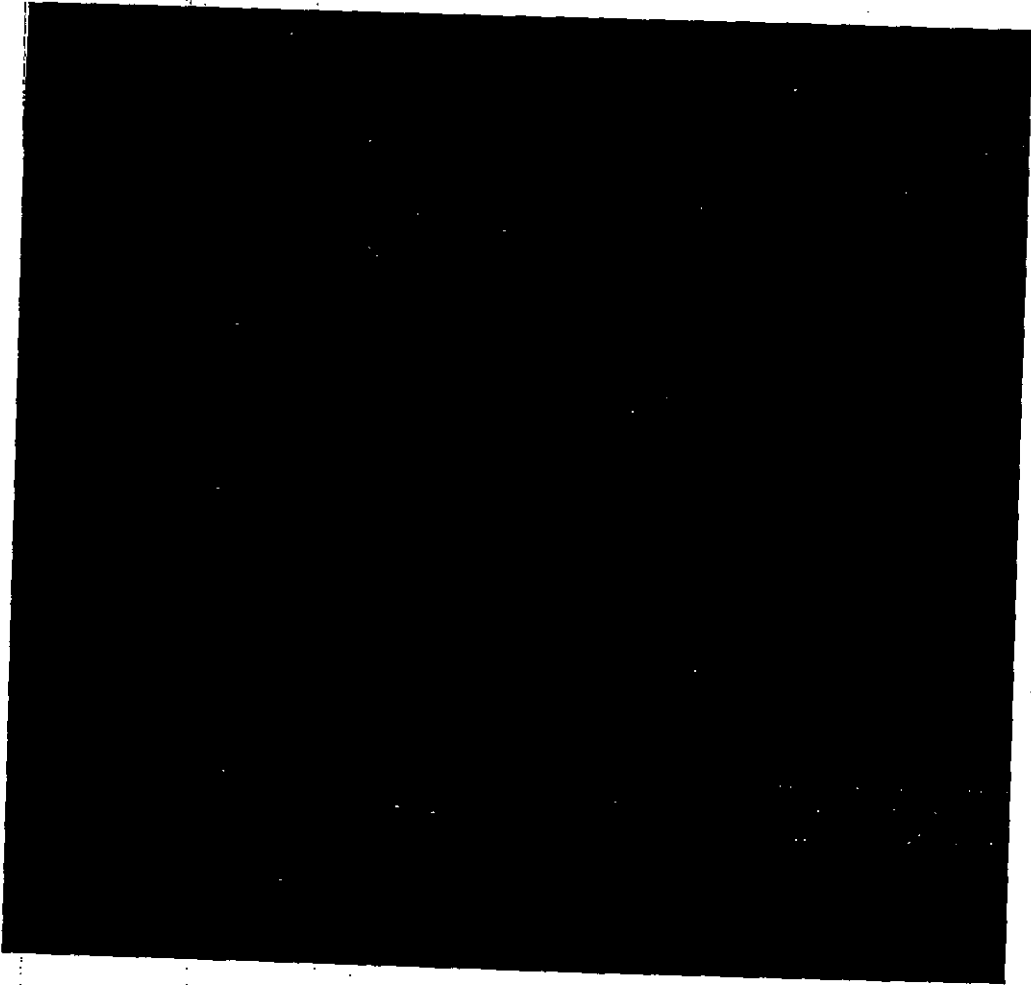
18 August 1977

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have been good, but now there is some irritation because of the territorial dispute over the Beagle Channel. Argentina-Brazilian relations had been improving, but controversy over problems associated with the Itaipu Dam on the Parana River are causing difficulty. Brazil, in any case, has true international aspirations and does not want to get bogged down in any regional squabbles.



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18 August 1977

5
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18 August 1977

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